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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 19, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHY FRUIT JUICE FOR THE BABY." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Yesterday, homemakers, I promised you a talk on "Why Fruit Juice for the Baby." After hearing this report from the United States Bureau of Home Economics, you will understand why fruit juice is so important.

But here's the story:

Recently, in a children's hospital in one of our big cities, seventeen babies were seriously ill with scurvy, all within four months' time. Something was very wrong in that community. Seventeen cases of scurvy are bad enough in themselves, but for each case that comes to the hospital, there are sure to be many other ailing babies outside, with nobody knowing just what is the matter with them.

Well, as I said before, this happened recently in one of our big cities. It happened because the babies had not had the right food. Probably the same thing is happening in other places where many people have been out of work for a long time, and their families have been on short rations. It can happen, however, where there is plenty of all kinds of food except fruits and vegetables. Or where people do not choose to eat enough fruits and vegetables. It can happen to babies that have plenty of milk and cod-liver oil and cereal -- but no oranges or tomato juice.

Scurvy is due to the lack of one particular food substance -- vitamin C, which we get chiefly from vegetables and fruits. Adults who eat plenty of vegetables and fruits do not have scurvy. Nor do babies that have orange juice or tomato juice every day. But anybody, young or old, who goes for a long time without such foods, or with not enough of them, will sooner or later show symptoms of scurvy. It may be mild at first, but gradually, as time goes on and vitamin C foods are still lacking, the disease becomes acute.

So the baby's orange juice, or tomato juice, is by no means just a fad or new-fangled notion. It is true our parents and grandparents, perhaps we ourselves, never had orange juice when we were babies. Oranges were too scarce. They came at Christmas time, for good children only, out of Santa Claus' pack. As for tomatoes, some people thought they were poison! Nobody thought these foods were necessary for babies then.

But times have changed -- especially for the babies. The United States Children's Bureau, in its directions for infants' care, advises a regular feeding of orange juice or tomato juice for the baby every day, beginning when he is a month old. This in addition to his milk and cod-liver oil. It is a safeguard against scurvy.

But why do we say this now, when babies used to get along without any orange or tomato juice? Nutritionists of the Bureau of Home Economics in the United States Department of Agriculture tell you why:

Babies that live on their mothers' milk are not likely to have scurvy. This is true for two reasons: The mother's milk contains vitamin C, if the mother has plenty of vegetables and fruits to eat, and the baby gets the milk before any vitamin value can be lost. But many, many babies nowadays do not live entirely on their mother's milk. And in times of unemployment and scarcity of money or food, many mothers do not have the vegetables and fruits they need to make their milk rich in vitamin C.

Bottle-fed babies -- and there are many of them -- do not get much, if any, vitamin C from the cow's milk that is in their bottles. Cow's milk when fresh from the cow does contain vitamin C, provided the cow is well-fed, but much of the vitamin C is lost before the milk can be delivered at your door. Cow's milk is usually pasteurized for the baby's use, in order to kill any harmful bacteria it may contain -- bacteria which might cause tuberculosis, or diphtheria, or some other infectious disease. To pasteurize milk, you heat it. This heating destroys vitamin C.

For the bottle-fed baby, then, his milk must be pasteurized to protect him from infectious diseases, even though this process destroys the vitamin C in milk, but there are other foods that furnish vitamin C. Orange juice and tomato juice are the best of such foods because they are so rich in vitamin C and because the baby can take them better than he can take the vegetables and fruits his parents and the older children may use -- such vegetables as cabbage, green peppers, and greens of all kinds, and such fruits as apples, peaches, and berries.

For the baby, in fact, orange juice and tomato juice are probably the most economical and convenient sources of vitamin C as well as the richest. The baby needs so little -- a teaspoon of strained orange juice twice a day, by the end of his first month, then 2 teaspoons, then a tablespoon twice a day by his third month. Of tomato juice, you give him about twice as much each time.

It is true that the babies' fruit juices cost a little more than their cereal, and more, in proportion, than their milk. But they do not cost much at that, and few mothers would fail to provide them somehow, if only they realized how important they are. Relief agencies, so far as they can do so, try to make sure the children of families on their lists get foods rich in vitamin C. But apparently, to quote one doctor, some mothers "think of the fruit juices as a nice thing for the baby if they can be readily afforded, but not as a real necessity. When the shoe pinches the juices will be among the first things to be dropped from the budget."

To provide orange juice for the baby alone, you need 2 or 3 oranges a week, depending on the size and juiciness. Never squeeze the orange and let the juice stand, however. It loses vitamin C that way. To make one orange go as far as possible for the baby, cut a small piece off one end and squeeze the juice from that end-piece for one feeding, then turn the cut surface of the orange into a plate or saucer and set it in a cool place until the baby's next feeding time. Then cut off another small piece of the orange, squeeze out of it another spoonful or two of juice, as required, and again turn the cut surface of the orange into the plate to keep for the next feeding -- and so on.

Tomatoes, fresh or canned, may be used for the baby's tomato juice. Strain off his portion of the juice when you open the can, and keep it closely covered in the coolest place you have.

All this brings us back to the nutritionists' advice to mother and housewives, repeated week after week by the Bureau of Home Economics in print and by radio and intended to apply to all the family; MAKE SURE FIRST TO GET THE PROTECTIVE FOODS, ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHILDREN, and then buy the other foods you need. If that rule is followed the baby will get his milk and his fruit juice, the older children and the rest of the family will get theirs, too.

In other words, the children should have tomatoes or oranges or the juice every day. As soon as they can take it, give them, every day, a green or yellow vegetable and some other fruit or vegetable besides. These are not all the foods they need, of course. But they are the ones they are most likely not to get unless somebody sees to it before the other, usually cheaper, foods are bought.

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